

Message Text

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ACDA-05 IO-10 NIC-01 EB-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00 SAM-01

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1914

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LISBON 1150

EO 11652: XGDS-4

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION

SUMMARY: IN CONVERSATION WITH DCM, MODERATE SOCIALIST LEADER CUNHA REGO SAID HE WAS OPTIMISTIC BECAUSE OF DEFEATS PCP HAD SUFFERED RECENTLY, BUT CONCERNED OVER POSSIBILITY OF SCHISM IN SOCIALIST PARTY. HE SAID PDC/CDS ALLIANCE WAS DISASTER FOR PDC, WHICH COULD HAVE BEEN LARGEST PARTY. PPD IS LOSING SUPPORT FOR LACK OF MUSCLE AND COURAGE. CUNHA REGO BELIEVES SOMETHING REASONABLE MAY EMERGE FROM AFM INSTITUTIONALIZATION PROGRAM, BUT FEARS NATURAL TENDENCY TOWARDS PERONISM. SOCIALISTS CAN SUPPORT COSTA GOMES IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, DISLIKE GONCALVES AND
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ROSA COUTINHO, WOULD CONSIDER SPINOLA REQUEST FOR PS SUPPORT,

FIND ANTUNES NOT SO BRIGHT, AND COUNT SARAIVA DE CARVALHO OUT. CUNHA REGO ENDED BY SAYING THAT PRESIDENT HAD TOLD SOARES THAT CULTURAL DYNAMIZATION CAMPAIGN WOULD BE ENDED. END SUMMARY.

1. DCM HAD LENGTHY CONVERSATION ON FEB 28 WITH VICTOR CUNHA REGO (CR), SOARES CONFIDENT, AND ONE OF LEADING MODERATES IN SOCIALIST PARTY (PS). CR HAS JUST LEFT HIS POSITION AS SOARES' CHIEF OF CABINET TO WORK ON CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATION. CR HAD FOLLOWING TO SAY ON CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION:

2. POSITION OF PCP:

NORMALLY PESSIMISTIC, CR SAID HE WAS FEELING BETTER ABOUT THINGS: THE COMMUNIST PARTY HAS BEEN WEAKENED NOTICEABLY IN THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS AND THE COMMUNISTS HAVE SUFFERED ONE DEFEAT AFTER ANOTHER: (A) PCP COULD NOT STOP THE ELECTION; (B) COMMUNIST ATTEMPTS TO DISRUPT THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN ARE BECKFIRING; (C) THE COMMUNISTS LOST OUT IN THEIR BID FOR MAXIMUM STRENGTHENING OF THE AFM VIA INSTITUTIONALIZATION; (D) ACCRETION OF POWERS TO THE NATIONAL SALVATION JUNTA HURTS THE COMMUNISTS; (E) THE PCP IS NOT HAVING MUCH POPULAR IMPACT IN ITS ELECTION CAMPAIGNING OUTSIDE OF LISBON. CR STATED THAT THE COMMUNISTS HAD THROWN EVERYTHING INTO THEIR EFFORT IN JANUARY TO INFLUENCE THE COURSE OF POLITICAL EVENTS, AND THEY HAD LOST. NONETHELESS, HE SAID, THE PCP WOULD KEEP TRYING AND WAS STILL EXTREMELY DANGEROUS. IN PARTICULAR, THE PCP WILL INCREASE ITS EFFORTS TO EMBRACE THE SOCIALISTS. HE STATED THAT HE NO LONGER FEARED A PCP-SPONSORED COUP, AS HE HAD IN MID-JANUARY.

3. POSITION OF SOCIALISTS:

THE SOCIALIST PARTY IS IN GOOD SHAPE NOW. ITS RALLIES ARE DRAWING BIG CROWDS. BUT CR SAW TROUBLE AHEAD IN THE NEAR FUTURE: A PRO-COMMUNIST FACTION LED BY GOMES LOPES IS GOING TO BOLT THE PARTY AND CR EXPECTS A SERIOUS SPLIT TO OCCUR. IT WILL HURT THE PARTY. THE SOCIALISTS DO NOT HAVE ANY FINANCIAL PROBLEMS. THEY ARE GETTING MONEY OPENLY FROM WEST EUROPEAN SOCIALIST PARTIES AND ARE DECLARING SO PUBLICLY. CR ADDED THAT THE PCP ALSO HAS NO MONEY PROBLEM.

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3. PDC/CDS ALLIANCE:

CUNHA REGO SAID HE WAS TOTALLY BAFFLED BY THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS' (PDC) ALLIANCE WITH THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CENTER (CDS), WHICH HE CALLED A DISASTER FOR THE PDC. CR SAID THAT THE PDC HAD A CLEAR OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME THE LARGEST PARTY IN THE COUNTRY. ALL IT HAD TO DO WAS BE RIGIDLY HONEST, DEMOCRATIC, ANTI-COMMUNIST, AND ANTI-CAETANO. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY WAS THE NATURAL TENDENCY OF THE PORTUGUESE PEOPLE, CR STATED,

AND MAJOR OSORIO WAS A RESPECTED FIGURE. BUT OSORIO HAS THROWN IT ALL AWAY BY ALLYING HIMSELF WITH THE FASCIST REMNANTS WHO HAVE TAKEN REFUGE IN THE CDS. CR ALSO SAW OSORIO'S ACTION AS HAVING AN INDIRECT, BUT HARMFUL INFLUENCE ON THE FATE OF THE SOCIALISTS. "WE MUST HAVE A RESPECTABLE PARTY TO THE RIGHT OF US, A PARTY WITH WHOM WE CAN JOIN IN A FUTURE COALITION, IN ORDER NOT TO BE THRUST INTO THE COMMUNIST CAMP." BY ALLYING WITH THE CDS, THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WILL LOSE THEIR RESPECTABILITY AND THIS WILL NARROW THE POLITICAL-PARTY SPECTRUM TO THE LEFT.

4. THE PPD:

ACCORDING TO CUNHA REGO, THE POPULAR DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PPD) IS LOSING SUPPORT FOR "LACK OF MUSCLE." THE PARTY LEADERSHIP LACKS COURAGE, AND THIS IS BECOMING APPARENT.
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5. AFM INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND THE MILITARY:

CUNHA REGO SEES TWO SEPARATE, BUT RELATED PROBLEMS IN THIS AREA. INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT (AFM) IS THE LESSER PROBLEM. TALKS WITH THE PARTIES ARE CONTINUING AND THE AFM IS NOT DICTATING TO THE CIVILIAN PARTIES. SOMETHING REASONABLE MAY EMERGE. ONE OF CR'S REAL FEARS IS THAT THE PORTUGUESE MILITARY WILL TIRE OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM AND SIMPLY INSTALL A PERONIST STYLE OF RULE. SOCIALIST ANXIETY AT PROSPECTS OF RIGHT-WING PERONISM IS GROWING. CR STATED THAT THE PORTUGUESE MILITARY ARE NOT COMPETENT TO RULE THE COUNTRY ALONE, BUT THEY DO NOT KNOW THIS. THE SOCIALIST PARTY WILL DO EVERYTHING IT POSSIBLY CAN TO COOPERATE WITH THE MILITARY AND STAY IN THE GOVERNMENT, BUT THIS IS DIFFICULT BECAUSE OF INGRAINED
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MILITARY ATTITUDES.

6. PERSONALITIES:

PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES: THE SOCIALISTS HAVE DECIDED THEY CAN SUPPORT COSTA GOMES IN A FUTURE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. HE IS A GOOD MAN, "BASICALLY A CIVILIAN." CR SAID THAT COSTA GOMES DOES NOT HAVE MUCH POWER "IN THE BARRACKS" IN HIS VIEW. PRIME MINISTER GONCALVES: MUTUAL DISLIKE AND DISRESPECT CONTINUE BETWEEN THE SOCIALISTS AND GONCALVES. CR SAID GONCALVES WAS TRYING TO COMPETE WITH COSTA GOMES AND FAILING IN THE COUNTRY AT LARGE. THEIR RELATIONSHIP APPEARS TO HAVE COOLED RECENTLY. CR'S IMPRESSION IS THAT GONCALVES' POSITION IS BECOMING WEAKER, ALTHOUGH HE STILL RETAINS MILITARY SUPPORT. ADMIRAL ROSA COUTINHO. WITHOUT ELABORATING CR SAID THE SOCIALISTS LOATHE HIM AND VICE VERSA. THE PARTY WOULD NEVER SERVE IN A GOVERNMENT HEADED BY ROSA COUTINHO; NOR WOULD THEY BE INVITED IN.

GENERAL SPINOLA: ACCORDING TO CR, STILL PROBABLY THE MOST POPULAR MILITARY FIGURE. THE SOCIALISTS CANNOT VOLUNTEER THEIR SUPPORT TO SPINOLA, BUT WOULD NOT WITHHOLD IT IF THE OCCASION AROSE. CR BEMOANED SPINOLA'S CONSPICUOUS LACK OF POLITICAL SKILL: "ALL SPINOLA HAD TO DO WAS SIT DOWN LAST AUGUST WITH HALF A DOZEN OTHER OFFICERS, SETTLE MATTERS AMONG THEMSELVES, AND THIS COUNTRY COULD HAVE HAD TWO-THREE YEARS OF PEACE."

MELO ANTUNES: CR THINKS HE IS NOT TOO BRIGHT IN REALITY, ALTHOUGH HE LOOKS IT COMPARED WITH SOME OTHERS. THE SOCIALISTS ARE WARY OF HIM, FOR REASONS THEY CANNOT QUITE SPELL OUT. OTELO SARAIVA DE CARVALHO: NOT A FACTOR, ACCORDING TO CR, AND LESS TRONG THAN HERETOFORE WITHIN THE ARMY.

7. CULTURAL DYNAMIZATION CAMPAIGN:

CR SAID THAT HE HAD JUST BEEN TOLD BY MARIO SOARES THAT

PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES HAD INSTRUCTED THAT THE AFM'S "DYNAMIZATION" CAMPAIGN BE BROUGHT TO AN END. CR WAS DELIGHTED AT THIS PROSPECT. QUERIED WHY THIS MIGHT BE HAPPENING, CR SAID THERE WERE TWO REASONS: FIRST, COSTA GOMES HAS NEVER LIKED THIS VENTURE; ALSO, THE AFM DYNAMIZATION CAMPAIGN WAS BACKFIRING, BECAUSE IT WAS MAKING THE MILITARY UNPOPULAR IN THE COUNTRY-SIDE.

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